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JOHN F. BERGMAN MEMORIAL ISSUE

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Our plane left Baltimore as the sun rose. Just before leveling-out, we broke through the grayness. The clouds formed an awe-inspiring cottony sea, the puffy tops whitened by the sun, motionless and seemingly stopped in time. It was truly a religious experience that I desperately wanted to share with another soul. I looked about anxiously and was crushed to see the person in the seat next to me asleep and oblivious to this miracle of GOD. I am compelled to write this pitiful description of one glorious event so that I might never forget the fleeting moment in time when all petty human thoughts left me. I thank you LORD.

JOHN FREDERICK BERGMAN

1944-2000

~ WRITTEN IN 1996 ~

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In Memorium: John F. Bergman (1944-2000)

By His Friends and Clients

E. Tomlinson Fort:

I never had the privilege of meeting John Bergman face to face. Over the years we conversed many times by phone or via e-mail. Numerous volumes from his inventory found their way onto my shelves. John was always a gentleman and offered his items at a fair price. When I heard of his sudden death, I was stunned and saddened. The numismatic world has truly lost one of its giants. With news of his death Wayne Homren, through the *E-Sylum*, asked people to send tributes and remembrances of John to me. Within hours of his posting they quickly came. Below you will find all those that I received. The number of people below are a true testament both to the number of friends John had and to the strength of his humanity. He will truly be missed.

Fred Lake:

I have just been informed that John Bergman passed away yesterday after a brief bout with cancer. John was a fine friend, a wonderful bibliophile and a true gentleman. His knowledge of numismatic literature was of the highest degree and he used that knowledge to advance interest in this arena throughout the coin collecting world. His contributions to the Numismatic Bibliomania Society included

duties as an Officer of the Society and as a writer over many years. John's passing is a loss to me, personally, and to the numismatic community as a whole. This is a salute to a true "Bibliomaniac".

Dennis and Desirée Kroh:

We were informed that John Bergman, the very personable, extremely honest and well-liked numismatic literature dealer, passed away. He was (along with long-time friend George Kolbe) one of the driving forces behind collecting of numismatic literature and had accumulated many appreciative customers over the years, including ourselves.

Only a few weeks ago John missed one of the big Long Beach shows (where his presence was often taken for granted) and his fellow dealers were informed he couldn't make it "this time" because he "had the flu". Knowing John, he would not have wanted us to mourn him prematurely. John had just finished setting up online catalogues of his inventory and planned to greatly expand his business after recently retiring from his full-time career in the construction industry.

It is indeed tragic that this will now not come to pass, as he had big aspirations for this venue and the patience to make it succeed. John Bergman was by far

one of the most likable fellows we have ever met. He was always very helpful and generous with his considerable knowledge, and his enthusiasm for the hobby of classical numismatics was almost beyond compare. He was never afraid to ask a question if there was something he was uncertain of, and was always very appreciative for the answers. He dealt with customers with unfailing honesty and never had a bad thing to say about anyone. John also had a personality that lit up every room he ever entered, and was a lot of fun to be around. A very caring and wonderful soul has left us... he will be severely missed by all who knew him, and those that did not have that privilege will never know what might have been...

David Lange:

I was so sorry to learn of John Bergman's passing. His absence at the recent Long Beach show, where he was always a fixture at the back of the hall, was noticed immediately, but I had no idea that his illness was serious. When I first began acquiring out-of-print numismatic literature, around twenty years ago, John was among my first influences and sources of supply. In more recent years, it was always a relief for me while working coin shows to wander over to his expansive display and do some browsing and gossiping. I can't place a value on the quality time that I spent with both John's inventory and the man himself. He was always thoughtful, mild mannered and gracious. In a small fraternity such as ours, the

loss of one such individual is a profound one, indeed.

Q. David Bowers:

I just received a telephone call from Dwight Manley advising me that the highly respected long-time dealer in numismatic literature in California, John F. Bergman, has passed away, after losing a battle with cancer.

His memory will always be cherished.

Curt Metz:

John lived in Lakewood, CA (as do I) and I have spent many a great time visiting his home. He had a very, very, very, understanding wife and loved "the grandkid". I never left his house without a "deal". In my very last visit he spent a lot of time educating me about antique books. I merely asked and he (not trying to sell) showed me every book he had that he thought I might find of interest or learn something from. Most every numismatic book I own is a salute to John Bergman and there is no replacing him. To all assembled *E-sylum* subscribers and NBS members, I publicly salute him and believe that he will receive a full "triumph" upon his arrival at his next destination.

Dave Welsh:

Requiescat in pacem frater noster Iohannes Bergman.

John was one of the all time good guys. He will be greatly missed by his many friends and acquaintances. I am among those whose life was in a measure enriched by knowing John, and I am deeply saddened to

learn of his passing. But he is now in a greater and far better realm, where his sunny personality may find even more scope for giving pleasure to others.

Dick Schaefer:

I was one of his distant customers, so never saw him, but he was awfully nice and easy to deal with. Knowledgeable too, but this is a more easily found trait. Thanks to Fred Lake, Dennis + Desiree Kroh, and others for notifying us. I was just about to call John to ask why he hadn't updated his pricelists since May, but now there is no need. Death again, in the midst of life. May we be as ready as John to have our conduct judged by God.

Cal Wilson:

I was both saddened and shocked to hear the news of John Bergman's passing. As most long-time members of the NBS know, John was one of the early moving forces in the formation of the Society. More than a mere dealer in rare numismatic literature, John possessed a true love for the hobby. I will never forget the many hours passed in his library when I stayed with him and Mary during my frequent trips to Southern California in the early '80s, as we worked to formalize the NBS.

We often met at George Kolbe's bookshop in Mission Viejo, and after our discussions John was like a "kid in a candy store" perusing George's inventory. I don't recall a time when I visited the Bergman's that he didn't "just have to show" me

his latest acquisitions, pointing out the perfection of the various pieces. When we would attend major shows such as the ANA, we sometimes shared hotel rooms, and it became a challenge between us as to which one would find the first "finest known" or "previously unknown" book, catalogue or periodical when the bourse floor first opened. Above all, John was a gentleman, scholar, and a true lover of numismatic books. I last spoke with John several months ago and had promised to accept his invitation to stay at his home during my next visit to Southern California. Sadly, that day will not come. Our hobby has lost yet another gem.

Teresa Darling:

I wish also to say goodbye to a very dear person, a true gentleman and a very great asset to the numismatic fraternity. I bought many books and had many great conversations with John as well as Mary, a sweet lady. I am truly sorry to hear this news. At the last Long Beach Show when John was missing we called Mary who would only say that John had been very sick but if we needed anything "just call". I saw John and Mary's son grow up every four months at Long Beach, he is a terrific young man and I am glad to know that he and Mary have each other right now.

All my sympathies, thoughts and regrets go to the family.

Thom Bray:

John Bergman was a gentleman. The world of numismatics,

indeed the world itself, is a smaller place tonight.

Stephen Pradier:

I wish to offer my condolences over the passing of John Bergman. I just recently started to acquire out-of-print numismatic literature. It was only last month that I called and spoke with him and placed an order for books with him. I am certain that others who share his interest will miss him. The Internet allowed me to locate John and to recently become a member of NBS.

David Sklow:

Sherry and I were deeply saddened by the news of John Bergman's passing. I have known John for more than twenty years, and considered him a good friend. He was always the calm, cool and collected one! The last time I saw John was when he attended the auction of another fellow bibliophile who left us before his time, the Ken Lowe sale last November in Dearborn. There is definitely truth in the saying, "the good die young." I know I speak for all of the numismatic brotherhood, when I say John will be missed!! If there was one thing I learned from him, it was if you are going to sell numismatic literature, do it right and pack it right!! You never wanted him to find a book touching the inside edges of a carton! We have lost four giants of numismatic literature in the last few years, I only wonder what great stories, Bergman, Champa, Collins and Lowe are swapping

upstairs!

Dave Michaels:

John was a true friend, a gentle soul who never failed to brighten my day at Long Beach and elsewhere. I am heartsick and in a state of shock to hear of his death. My deepest condolences and sympathy to all John's relations, and to everyone who has gotten to know him over the years. I am too sad to say anything else right now, except John, I'll miss you.

Joel J. Orosz:

Wilson Mizner once remarked that "under the phony tinsel of Hollywood you will find the real tinsel." John Bergman was just the opposite: the integrity that was so evident on the surface of the man went right down to his core. John was thus a natural choice to be treasurer of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society in its early years. Everyone knew the books would balance to the last cent and that the votes would be tallied with 100% accuracy. What tells you something about the man, however, is that even after his term as treasurer ended, successive presidents asked him to keep counting the ballots, because they knew that not even a hint of vote fraud could ever be suspected when the result was announced by John Bergman. One might think that such a paragon of rectitude would be a stuffed shirt: dull and uninspiring. Nothing could have been further from the truth, John's robust laugh was unforgettable; I can remember hearing it from

three aisles away at an ANA convention. He never took himself too seriously, never flaunted the considerable knowledge that he possessed, never got involved in petty or pointless controversies. He was, in many ways, like the antiquarian numismatic books that he so dearly loved: a rarity that had stood the test of time, full of wisdom and delight for all.

I last talked with John a few months ago, when I called to order a book from his website. We talked literature, of course, but he also spoke of the joys of being retired, of spending time with family, and especially, of playing with his young grandson. What a comfort it is to think of how happy he was at the end, but what a sadness to think of how prematurely he has left us. His is a legacy of decency, honor, bibliophilia, and true friendship. We may aspire to match John as a collector, or as a dealer, but we will never be able to surpass his stature as a man of sheer class. Farewell old friend there will never be another like you.

Michael Billings:

John Bergman lived and worked 10 minutes from my office in Cerritos California. The last time I saw him was the first time I visited his home in July of this year. I went to purchase a copy of *The Fantastic 1804 Dollar* after attending the ANA Summer Conference, telling him that the book was to be signed by the authors. I said that I intended spending many lunch hours at

his place to find biblio-treasures. He seemed to find this amusing. I only regret that I didn't follow up on my intent. I reasoned, when I remembered, that I knew where John was and I could go see him whenever I found the time, inclination or need.

He was a gentleman, a rather rare quality these days. He was quiet, unassuming with a light sense of humor. Always polite and helpful. I can, in my mind's eye, visualize the living room of his home and the rooms where his books were stored.

I always visited his booth at the Long Beach show, many times buying nothing but always taking away the feeling that I didn't have to buy from him in order to be his and his lovely wife's friendly acquaintance. I certainly noticed his absence at the recent Long Beach Convention. He was a fixture in the far left corner of the hall. Many people I spoke with noticed his absence too. He was missed. I thought he didn't show up because of the work involved in lugging all those books around. He told me a couple times in the past that he didn't know if the work and effort was worth the return he received from setting up at the show. If the friends and acquaintances he made through Long Beach are anything to judge by, perhaps it was worth all the effort he exerted. For if were not for his participation, I and many others like me would have never come to know him. I only wish I would have known him better but am thankful for the oppor-

tunity I had to know him at all.

My thoughts and prayers are with his family. Numismatics has lost a great asset, he will be missed.

Jess Patrick:

The passing of John Bergman leaves me in shock. I was always glad to see him at every Long Beach Show and spent quite a lot of time with him at those shows considering how busy he usually was. I always felt at ease with John and never had anything but a pleasant transaction with him. He was always very trustworthy and straightforward in his dealings as well as in giving information. I will miss his charm, great sense of humor, and perhaps most of all his extraordinary council on my numismatic book purchases which I have come to rely upon so heavily. His council was of course based on his vast knowledge of numismatic literature which, coupled with the above attributes, put him at the top of his profession. I trusted John enough that had I died prematurely he was to be asked to liquidate my numismatic books. I will really, really miss John and forever remember him on those occasions when I glance to the back of the room at any Long Beach Show and find his absence in my world.

Jim Stofle:

I received the sad news of John Bergman's death and wanted to respond to the requests for remi-

niscences about John.

I've collected coins for 35 years but didn't know anything about the availability of older numismatic reference books until I wandered into the back of the hall at the Long Beach Coin Show in the early 1990's and had the good fortune to meet John and his lovely wife.

John sold me a book I'd wanted for years and got me excited about building a library of numismatic reference material.

John always had a warm smile to greet me with and an entertaining story or two to pass the time. John was always glad to see me when I stopped by and it didn't matter whether I spent two cents or two hundred dollars with him. He was always generous with his time and genuinely interested in my collecting interests. John was a class act in a hobby that needs more people like him.

Bill Murray:

I'm not sure when I first met John Bergman, but from the first he impressed me with his knowledge, but more importantly with being a gentleman. In our hobby we often spend most of our time getting to know people at long distance. It was that way for me with John. Many times I vowed I would find an opportunity to spend some meaningful time with him one-on-one as one of the stalwarts of our hobby and the world. It's my loss it never happened.

Checking in at the Hotel California: A Visit with John Bergman and George Kolbe*

by Wayne Homren

Bibliophiles beware: you never know when a fellow book nut will show up at your doorstep. Last summer, when presented with the chance to attend a conference in the Los Angeles area, I immediately volunteered and quickly placed calls to both John Bergman and George Kolbe.

A few weeks later, my plane touched down at LAX, late on a Saturday afternoon. After checking into my room at the Anaheim Hilton, I called my friend Cathy Rivi, a co-worker who had arrived earlier on a different flight. We met in the lobby where John Bergman was waiting to greet us. We climbed into John's van for the ride back to his home in Lakewood.

Pulling into the Bergman driveway, I noticed a tell-tale sign: drawn curtains in the garage window. All true bibliophile households share a common characteristic: all non-essential space has been commandeered for bookshelves. After the den and spare bedroom, the garage is always the next to go, followed by other non-essential areas like

the family room, hallways, and children's bedrooms. At least John waited until the kids had grown and moved out. (Or did he squeeze them out, one book at a time...?)

John's lovely wife Mary greeted us and soon filled the coffee table with a tempting array of cookies and liquid refreshments. The dining room table was already filled with a display of books from John's numismatic library. His specialty is fine and unusual bindings, and the books displayed were magnificent examples of the bookbinder's art. Some highlights:

American Numismatics

The first work which caught my eye was F.D. Andrews, *U.S. Copper Cents 1816-1857*. John had six different editions: Andrews, Mehl, Gutttag, and three by Hewitt.

I also saw M.W. Dickenson's *The American Numismatical Manual*, (Philadelphia, 1865). The third edition with the original blind stamped green cloth with an 1849 twenty dollar gold

***Author's Note:** This article was written in 1992, but as far as anyone I have asked can remember, it was never published, at least not in *The Asylum*. Now, with John's death, it seems fitting to recall this meeting between John, George and myself. Hopefully it will illustrate why John has left behind so many friends and so many happy memories.

piece embossed in gilt on the front cover. The cloth binding exhibits original sheen.

F.W. Doughty, *The Cents of the United States* (New York, 1890). A pristine copy in original cloth with the gilt impression of a wreath cent on the front cover.

Foreign Numismatics

P. Delarouche, *Tresor de numismatique et du Glyptique*. Three folio volumes superbly bound in full levant morocco and richly decorated in gilt. Both sides with gilt embossed emblem of the "Order of the Garter"

J. Millingen and A.L. Millin, *Historie metallique de Napoleon..., avec le supplement* (Paris 1819-21). The finest binding in John's library, this magnificent copy was bound by R.P. Ginain, binder to King Louis-Philippe, in full dark green grained morocco with ornate gilt and blind decoration, all edges gilt, with green silk endsheets.

J.F. Valliant, *Seleucidarum Imperium, Sive Historia Regnum Syriae* (The Hague, 1732). The binding was full contemporary pressed morocco with finely gilt decorated spine compartments and gilt paneled sides. Heavily gilt edges, with the paper as fresh as the day it was made.

The doorbell rang and in walked Jack Collins. Jack and I had met only briefly at an earlier ANA convention, but had talked on the phone recently when I called to order a hardbound copy of his Washingtonia catalogue. We all sat and chatted for a while, on topics ranging from earthquakes, real estate, and

health care, to (naturally) numismatic literature and dealing in the same.

We took a tour through John's crowded but neat office, library, and duplicate stock. More lovely volumes were to be found on the shelves, including: Marvin's *Masonic Medals*, Burns' *Coinage of Scotland* and various editions of Heath's *Counterfeit Detector*.

Eventually we all grew hungry enough to start thinking about dinner. Mexican, we decided, and soon we all piled into John's van for a trip to a nearby restaurant, where margaritas and Mexican beers quenched our thirst. More pleasant conversation ensued, and Jack entertained us with stories of the changing culture of his neighborhood, where custom apparently dictates against the use of mufflers on cars.

Having too much fun to retire early, we decide to drive over to Long Beach and take in the sights. We parked the van and the five of us strolled onto the decks of the *Queen Mary*, the luxury ocean liner turned hotel, shopping mall, and tourist attraction. The Bergman's son was recently married in the ship's wedding chapel.

We continued our conversation while walking the ship's decks, enjoying the cool breeze and viewing the city's twinkling skyline. The ears of Kay and Armand Champa must have been burning that night; we thought of them several times, and looked forward to seeing them at the upcoming ANA convention.

By 11:30 (2:30am Pittsburgh time) it was time to call it a night. As John dropped Cathy and I off at our hotel, he and I made plans to meet again the next morning for a journey to Crestline.

John arrived right on time Sunday morning, and steered the van toward the freeway. The hour and twenty-minute ascent into the mountains gave us plenty of time to talk numismatics. One sobering thought was the sad state of numismatic organizations across the country. John lamented that the median age of the regular members in his Orange County club is around 70. That doesn't bode well for the club's future.

The twisting ride up the mountainside afforded us breathtaking views at every turn. Around 11am we pulled into George Kolbe's driveway. His lovely wood-framed home blended neatly into the hillside, and was shrouded by several tall trees. George ushered us into his office and before long John and I were examining a tremendous stock of numismatic literature. We also looked at a number of nice items consigned to George's next sale, including a rare plated Elder catalogue. The owner, oblivious to the catalog's significance, had stored it for many years in a box in his garage.

Time passed quickly and soon George's wife Linda was ringing the lunch bell. She'd prepared a delicious lasagna complimented by the tastiest salad and garlic bread I'd had in years. A finer meal could not be had in any

restaurant, and no restaurant could top the rich brownies we had for dessert.

Drowsy but fortified, John, George, and I returned to the office for more book browsing. John selected a boxful of books to buy, and I made several selections of my own. My purchases included a number of recent, but elusive titles, many pertaining to U.S. Mint history:

Mint Histories

R. Barfield and K. Strawn, *The Bechtlers and Their Coinage: North Carolina Mint Masters of Pioneer Gold* (Raleigh, NC, 1980).

E.S. Ferguson, editor, *Early Engineering Reminiscences (1815-40) of George Escol Sellers* (Washington, 1965). This Smithsonian Institution bulletin includes a chapter relating the story of Sellers' visit to the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia as a young boy. Chief Coiner Adam Eckfeldt handed the lad a freshly-coined cent, which he promptly dropped since it was still hot from the coining press.

B. McGinty, *Haraszthy at the Mint* (Los Angeles, 1975). Hungarian immigrant Agoston Haraszthy was a colorful California pioneer who served as assayer for the first San Francisco Mint.

H.H. Wilkinson, *The Mint Museum of Art at Charlotte* (Charlotte, 1973)

Other Titles

I also picked up a few other titles of interest. Castenholz and Sons, *The Numismatic Messenger*, volumes 1-2 (1971-1972), bound

in red cloth.

J.G. Lipsius, *A Bibliography of Numismatic Books Printed Before 1800, with The Supplement to 1866* by J. Leitzmann (Colchester, 1977) [Drury reprint]

Budget constraints kept me from purchasing everything which caught my fancy. Chamberlain's 1963 work on *American Medals and Medallists* would have to wait for another time. I also had to pass on a copy of *Virtuoso's Companion* with a hometown pedigree. The book held the library stamp of former Pittsburgher Dr. Robert J. Hudson. The antiquarian volume had previously been owned by W.S. Appleton.

To get some fresh air, John, George and I drove down the road to the nearby ruin of a 1930's era mansion, which had burned to the ground in a fire a few years earlier. We walked through the graffiti-covered grounds perched at the very edge of the mountain, commanding a spectacular view of the hills and valley below. The powerful updraft seemed enough to blow a person back from the edge.

Just up the road, we saw people leaping off the cliff, soaring high into the air while dangling from their colorful hang-gliders. We watched, gawked, and shook our heads and got back into our landlocked van and returned to the house.

Over beer we chatted some more about books, numismatics, numismatists, dealers, dead-beats, and sundry ne'er-do-wells. I lamented having been "born

too late" to take advantage of the all-time bargains in numismatic literature. We agreed that if one person had come along at the right place and time, it was John J. Ford. In the course of his career Ford had the opportunity to acquire the most important rarities in numismatics and numismatic literature at a time when few others appreciated their value and significance.

George told us about his new catalogue for Armand Champa's 1991 ANA exhibit of "Numismatic Americana," showing us copies of his final draft. By a fluke of alphabetization, an item I traded to Armand ended up being the first listing: John Beck's deluxe half leather copy of *Edgar Adams' Private Gold Coinage of California, 1849-55*. I had purchased the book along with many others at the estate sale of Justin Lees, Beck's son-in-law. After being reminded of that sale, I comforted myself with the thought that good bargains go overlooked by every generation, and that opportunities are always around us. I can only hope that another such opportunity will present itself someday.

While it seemed that we had only just arrived, John and I had put in nearly a full 8 hour day at the Kolbe's; it was time to go. We bade George farewell and began rolling back down the mountain. At the hotel I again thanked John for his hospitality and headed for my room. The coming week's conference activities could be no match for my memories of the past weekend.

John Frederick Bergman Numismatic Bookseller - Friend

By George F. Kolbe

I met John in the late 1970s – perhaps at my June 1979 sale which he attended in Los Angeles during the Convention of International Numismatics. He then appeared to be quiet and retiring but I soon learned that he could be, and often was, the life of the party. As I write this, John has been gone from us nearly two weeks. I have read the many fine tributes in the *E-sylum* and elsewhere, and have wished to make a contribution. But the words would not come and, even now, I am at a loss as to how to adequately convey what John meant to our community and to me.

John Bergman was an unassuming giant. Honesty, integrity, humility, talent, keen intelligence, capacity, compassion, a sometimes outrageous sense of humor — all were qualities he had in abundance. The longer I knew him the more I admired him. I traveled to Lakewood for his sales, and, for two decades, he traveled the ninety minutes to Crestline to participate in most of my auction sales held over that period. Usually there was a lull in the telephone bidding when John and I could visit personally. This past June, the last time I saw him, he attended the fourth Bass sale in June. During that sale ANA President H. Robert Campbell came to the podium and requested a short

break so that John could be presented an ANA award. To say that John was dragged kicking and screaming from the auction is not all that great an exaggeration. After John's funeral, a close friend of his asked me about this award. It seems that John's family could not find the award, nor had John told them anything about it, though I clearly recall the pleased look on his face as he returned to the sale room.

During the sale telephone/fax/email bidding slowed down for a short period in the mid-afternoon, and John and I had time to brag on our sons, in their 30s and attending, at different campuses, the University of California – both doing extremely well in their respective studies. John also spoke of his grandchild, whom he obviously doted on, and about how much he was enjoying selling numismatic literature through his web site, customized price lists, and attendance at the three annual Long Beach coin shows. His son Jim told me that the past two years were the most enjoyable of John's life.

In April 1991, John and I journeyed to Frankfurt, Germany to attend the two-day, 2700 lot auction sale of the important Adolph Hess numismatic library, conducted by the venerable auction firm of Dr. Busso Peus Nacht. It was John's first over-

seas sale. Each day the sale started at 9:00 a.m.; there was an hour lunch break at noon; then the sale resumed – scheduled to end at 7:00 p.m., but on both days the sale continued beyond the time allotted, on the final day until after 9:00 p.m. if memory serves. Both John and I were exhausted, though not scheduled to return home until two days following the sale. On Wednesday, May 1st, after a good night's rest, we spent the day together on a boat tour up the Rhine. I have very fond memories of that day. Vineyards beginning to stir on the carefully sloped hillsides, a castle seemingly on the top of every rise, pleasant village and city stops along a river steeped in history, where we indulged, with gusto, in the calming drafts of the local brewmasters, and traditional German cuisine. Fair weather, charming scenery, most of all, good company and much laughter. There are so many other good times that we shared but I expect that this memory of John will stand out in days to come.

Neither John nor I came from the world of academia. We both married young, and well, and soon we had families to raise. John pursued a career as a sheet metal worker, eventually designing, fabricating, and installing massive heating and air conditioning ductwork for a large Southern California firm. I recall several years ago that he spent nearly a year working near Los Angeles International Airport on a major industrial project. My career in supermarket manage-

ment became less than fulfilling in the 1970s and, upon the success of my first numismatic literature auction in 1976, over the next few years I devoted my energies to becoming a fulltime numismatic bookseller.

Southern California in the late 1970s was a veritable numismatic literature mecca. Locals such as Jack Collins, Alan Meghrig, John and myself, frequent visitors like Armand Champa (L. A. was figuratively a hop, skip, and a jump from his favored Riviera Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas), Cal Wilson and Jesse Patrick from Northern California, John Adams and Harry Bass making the occasional foray from parts East, and others I am surely unfairly forgetting to mention — all combined to make the area a hotbed of activity for rare and desirable American numismatic literature. In reality, none of us then knew nothin'. As we all learned, we carved out careers and/or formed fine libraries, and had a tremendous amount of fun in the process.

Things have changed. Two of our bookends, Jack, and John, are no longer with us; Armand Champa, everyone's best customer, is gone; others' shelves became filled or their interests strayed. Many new bibliophiles have joined the fray, and the game is every bit as exciting as it was two decades ago. But Jack and John, two of the best friends numismatic literature ever had, are no longer here to bid us up, cheer us on, and keep us informed. It will not be the same.

Remembering John Bergman

By Karl Moulton

John Bergman was one of the nicest guys you would ever want to meet. His honesty and gracious manner were a welcome influence in the numismatic market place; and he thoroughly enjoyed numismatic literature, especially antiquarian books about ancient coinage.

It was several years ago, during one of our many visits with John and his lovely wife Mary, that he related a story about a book he was currently reading. He mentioned that he wasn't the craziest book collector after all. The book he was reading was titled, *A Gentle Kind of Madness*. For those not familiar with the contents, it's a work filled with stories about "overly dedicated" book collectors.

He loved to eat. When Jenny and I would head to the Long Beach shows, where John and Mary would set up against the back wall, we would usually go out to dinner with them afterwards. There were numerous times when we ended up at the local buffet.

Naturally, the dinner conversations were filled with John relating stories about numismatic literature, collectors and background events relating to earlier purchases he had made. One rather humorous incident was a taxi cab ride he had in New York city while attending a Kolbe/Spink sale. Apparently, he was "taken for a ride" by the

cabby. John laughed when he said, "it would have been cheaper to rent a car for the week!"

John was good at laughing. He would even laugh at his own jokes. It always made you feel good and want to laugh, too.

Although he was a serious student of numismatic literature, he never lost his friendly outlook while conducting business. The only time I ever saw a strong emotional outburst from John was at the Bass IV Sale conducted by George Kolbe in June 2000. Although no one knew it at the time, this would be the last numismatic literature auction he would ever attend. John took a seat in the rear corner of the room, which was his usual spot. Several hours into the sale, in walked ANA president Robert Campbell, who slowly made his way to the podium. In between lots, Campbell had a brief discussion with Kolbe. George then made an announcement that "there will be a short break" while Campbell turned around and headed back out. All of a sudden we heard John yell, "Oh for crying out loud!", as he slammed his pencil down. Everyone watched as he was escorted from the room by a smiling Campbell and an aide.

I happened to glance back at Kolbe's face which was turning redder by the second, and he was chuckling just like Santa.

Soon after John had left the

room, there was some good-hearted comments tossed around. First was that he had forgotten to pay his ANA dues. The someone thought he did not pay for parking and they had towed his van. Finally, George related that John was going to receive the ANA President's Award for distinguished service. George also said

he knew of no one more deserving.

John Bergman never wanted to bother anyone with his troubles. That is why he never let it be known that he was battling cancer; a struggle which he lost early on the morning of October 18, 2000. He was a true prince among men and he will be fondly remembered.

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How to Pack Books*

By John F. Bergman

The proper packing of books for shipping is all about common sense. Unfortunately, as Will Rogers said: "The thing about common sense is that it is just not that common." This pretty much sums up the sorry state of book packing. Proper packing takes little longer than poor packing and the cost difference is very slight.

Don'ts:

1. Never allow any corner of any book to be directly against any corner or any box.
2. Don't pack loose books (books must be wrapped in paper or placed in bags within the box).
3. Do not use second hand boxes. Used boxes that have lost their shape have also lost their structural strength.
4. Do not use shoe, donut, gift-wrapping or tissue (Kleenex) boxes for shipping books. Boxes should be of corrugated construction and a minimum of 200 pounds per square inch bursting strength. Heavier weight boxes or doubled boxes may be required with

very heavy or fragile books.

5. Do not use non-compressible fill around books. The force of an impact will transfer through the fill and damage the books. Compressible yet resilient fill is a must. It can be reused and includes all of the following: foam loose fill cushioning ('peanuts'), foam or cellulose roll cushioning, shredded paper, crumpled paper (newspapers are ideal), bubble wrap, corrugated sheets and pads, etc.
6. Do not tie boxes with string, rope or bands. This is still a widely used method in Europe but is not acceptable in the United States and with good reason. These ties tend to get stuck in machinery with potential damage to both the package and contents. Even worse is the common European practice of wrapping books in one or more layers of bubble wrap and then tying the package with string. The string invariably leaves dents and or grooves in the books. Instead of using these ties, use rein-

***Editor's Note:** One thing upon which John Bergman was always adamant was the proper packing of the books which he sent to his customers. I often joked that John sent the books which I bought as if they were to survive a nuclear war. On the other hand, any book which you ordered from him was never damaged by the shipper. John wrote and published the following essay in *The Asylum* 8/2 (1990), pp.19-21. It is presented here, and on the NBS website, through the kind generosity of his family. It is my hope that it will serve as a proper "how to" for book dealers for generations to come.

forced tape around the box, in both directions, if necessary.

7. Don't use padded mailers (Jiffy bags) for shipping soft bound books or catalogs unless they are first wrapped in at least a double layer of heavy cardboard with the catalog immobilized within. The cardboard must be larger than the catalog in order that the corners will not be crushed. It is not always safe to ship even a light weight hard bound books in a padded mailer as there is little protection from bending and corner banging. Use padded mailers only sparingly and in conjunction with additional internal protection.
8. Don't ship packages that are not properly sealed. All box flaps must be sealed and additionally, on heavy boxes or packages shipped overseas, all of the folded edges should be taped as well. Large or heavy boxes require more tape. One layer of the standard 1.8 mil carton sealing tape applied down the center of the box flaps is not sufficient for any package! [I have received boxes weighing 40 pounds and more sealed in this manner. In one case the tape was broken and the books ready to fall out. In another case some of the books were missing and in another the box was empty]
9. Don't expect any carrier to "Handle with care", regardless of what instructions you stamp on the box. In one instance I asked a large U.S.

bookseller to pack with compressible fill around all of the book corners, instead they shipped 35 pounds of books in a box exactly the size of the contents with instructions written on all six sides of the box reading: "DO NOT DROP ON THE CORNERS". Needless to say the box was dropped and two books had damaged corners. [Conveyor belts, catapults, and other package handling equipment don't read instructions nor do employees who are often working under time and quota conditions].

Do's:

1. Preparing the contents: Arrange the books to be shipped in pyramid shaped piles with the largest book on the bottom and the smallest book on the top. Make the stacks a minimum of from 1/2 to 1 inch less than the height of the box to be used. The books can be wrapped individually but this is not absolutely necessary unless the books are very fragile. The entire stack can be wrapped in paper (newspaper is not recommended as the ink can transfer to the book covers especially if they are light in color). Plastic bags are good and very quick, just be sure that the bags are closed with tape so that the compressible fill does not come in contact with or become wedged into the leaves or dust jackets of the books. Note: As the spines of bound books are thicker than the fore-edges, it

is a good practice to rotate each successive book 180 degrees so that the stacks do not become lop sided.

2. Packing the box: The correct size box is critical. Select a box that is at least 3 to 4 inches longer and 1/2 to 1-inch wider minimum than the stack or stacks of books to be shipped. Before placing the stacks of books in the box lay at least a 1/4-inch thick layer of cardboard, bubble wrap or other padding in the bottom of the box. Center the stack or stacks of books in the box. Fill the space all around the books with the compressible material making sure that the fill is very tightly pressed in (this is especially important with foam 'peanuts' as they tend to settle during shipping which will allow the books to move around). Never place the books against a corner of the box and fill in the remaining two sides. Invariably, the box will be dropped on this unprotected corner and the book corners will be banged. [This is by far the most common mistake made in packing and some of the biggest and oldest numismatic booksellers in the world do it time and time again].
3. Closing the box: Before closing the box, lay at least a 1/4 inch thick layer of cardboard, bubble wrap or other padding

on top of the stack of books. This step is critical as many inexperienced book collectors will slash away with a razor knife at the box flaps. If there is no protection the knife may cut into the books. In closing the box it is very important to use a strong tape. Gummed, reinforced Kraft tape is probably the best, but those who pack boxes only occasionally will find polypropylene carton-sealing tape strong enough and easier to use. Use plenty of tape especially on heavy packages. Once the box is closed, it is important to protect the address label from damage. This is easily accomplished by covering the label with clear polypropylene tape. UPS does this on all packages but the U.S. Postal Service does not.

We realize that many reading these packing recommendations are not booksellers and will only occasionally pack books. If the job of book packing seems too difficult, we recommend that you take the books to a professional packing service. For those of you who want to do it yourself, you will find that all of the materials mentioned are readily available at office supply stores. The U.S. Postal Service will even supply boxes free of charge for certain priority and express mail material.

Ard W. Browning Comes Home

By Carl R. Herkowitz

Had the legendary Ard W. Browning never written his signature numismatic work — *The Early Quarter Dollars Of The United States*, denied himself the destiny that became his defining moment, then his mysterious life and its enduring and endearing significance would now be naught, lived through and done, ever lost and slipped in among the passing sands of time. While fate reclaimed him from such outright oblivion, Browning's self-imposed anonymity (attributable to working and living in Central Islip, a large, early-20th century state mental hospital) certainly simulated as closely as possible said oblivion that was only incidentally thwarted by his supreme accomplishment. Indeed, he did write *The Early Quarter Dollars Of The United States* — a masterwork — the groundbreaking definitive reference, a latter day cousin in spirit to Audubon's iconic *Birds of America* in its specialty, its realm. And his invisible, inviting life impels research today, 67 years after his death.

Charles Davis sees Browning as "one of the most invisible personages of American numismatics."¹ Later, in cataloguing the Champa library sale he fur-

ther wrote

Browning is the most invisible numismatic author with absolutely no positive proof surfacing to date that he, at least as a numismatist, ever existed. An application in that name for membership in the A.N.A. was sponsored by two dealers, Rud. Kohler and Julius Gutttag, and he became a member effective February, 1925 giving a P. O. box in Central Islip, Long Island as an address. And that is where the trail ends. Despite the notice in the preface that the coins depicted on the plates are from the author's collection, no 'Browning' collection with these coins has been identified. And the superb text is not that of a novice, nor does it seem to be from the pen of the sometimes cryptic Raymond...²

This year, Eric Li Cheung wrote that "If Ard W. Browning existed, he certainly was an evanescent character not known to many collectors and numismatists."³

His signature work detoured from being precisely that, as, characteristically consistent with his ever mysterious self, the very name appearing in the book, credited as the author, is "designed" as "A. W. Browning" — either a suggestion realized on the part of his eminent publisher, Wayte Raymond, as a practical alternative to the use of

¹C.E. Davis, *American Numismatic Literature, An Annotated Survey of Auction Sales, 1980-1991* (Lincoln, 1992), p. 28.

²C.E. Davis, *The Armand Champa Library Sale, Part II*, Bowers and Merena, Inc., 23 March 1995, p. 51, lot 1102.

³E.L. Cheung, "Draped Bust quarters, 1796-1807," *The Numismatist* 113 (2000), p.663.

the unfamiliar name "Ard," or more likely, an ultimate Central Islip ruse from our hero — perhaps an agreement, a consensus of the two! Did Raymond know Browning's secret, or just the location "P. O. Box 539" in the town of Central Islip? This phantomlike renaissance man Browning, a Dr. Livingstone to our accumulative Stanley, this single-handed stylist of the standard itself ... and the very rare standard edition, the revered deluxe interleaved edition, and those unique photographic glass negatives of "bibliophilic" lore — the singular driving force of a simon-pure studious pursuit, then later a time-honored legacy that evolved largely following his passing and due only to its own greatness.

Enigmatic, *Arduous* (W.) taskmaster nonpareil, the undaunted, devoted author/innovator can now be known to have died on Wednesday, May 24, 1933, at 1:45 p.m., at the age of 64. Hail a king forever akin to his beloved bust quarter series! The very name (and numbers) Browning has become a veritable byline to these pioneer silver coins of 1796-1838. Since the 1997 *Asylum* article in which benefactor Ard was seen in substance as an actual person, an employee/resident stenographer and "silent" author at the Central Islip State Hospital in Central Islip, Suffolk County, Long Island, New York.⁴ Since that recent time of his real-life re-emergence, Lady Luck, smil-

ing upon the continuance of a quest of a dream so fine, has forwarded research to uncover yet more documental information from his life and death. While the everyday particulars of his story are still unknown, a veiled presence now begins to take form a step or two out from the confining shadows. A fond exception to the oft-repeated assertion of leading American novelist Thomas Wolfe, Ard W. Browning is coming home.

Out from the shadows and the veneer of P. O. Box 539. The same place, that hidden corner of New York State, where he labored with the painstaking devotion of a scholastic monk to meticulously arrange and classify all those intricate varieties in unerringly completing his mission, done entirely or in part during the seven years prior to publication while endeavoring within the walls of what was often commonly referred to as a crazy house! Moreover, to think, to even defy thought, that a mere several additional varieties have supplemented his original 90 in the intervening 75 years since the debut of Early Quarter Dollars — a Promethean triumph, a "labor of love" as a gift to us all, now as new sources of information come to light.

The clue: prior to the 1997 article, a revealing comment in a letter from then ANA Library Assistant Nancy Givan regarding her search for fresh information on Browning at the Colorado Springs facility:

4 C.R. Herkowitz, "Ard W. Browning through a 1920 looking glass," *The Asylum* 15/3 (1997), pp.8-12.

Could not find any personal information anywhere. And I did exhaust this library. He was a subscriber to the George Heath Memorial Fund in October, 1925. I did find his membership to ANA, 1925-1933. He joined February 1, 1925, last dues were paid December, 1932 for year 1933.⁵

Hail Columbia! The Depression years 1932 and 1933, a scrimping time when one, especially a published authority over 60 years of age and living in the medical technologies of two-thirds of a century ago, would just not likely abandon paid-up dues in a favored national hobby association. Most fortunately re-reading her pivotal letter following the publication of the earlier article, after having come to "know" him better, it seemed fairly elementary that brother Ard had left this mortal coil while at his hospital post either in December, 1932 or during 1933.

Spurred onward to once again contact the Pilgrim Psychiatric Center in West Brentwood, New York, the repository of existing personnel records of former Central Islip State Hospital employees (having first approached that facility while researching "Looking Glass"), helpful Registrar Margaret Simai and Associate Director Milo Maldonado promptly and faithfully replied, stating that Browning's employee record was destroyed ten years after his death in accordance with then New York State law. De jà vu.

Ard's ghost was determinedly holding hard and fast to his historical invisibility and invincibility, but for the bequeathance of an enclosure this second time around, of another document routinely also requested, a treasure literally from that asylum for *The Asylum!* Gracing the surprisingly thick envelope received from Pilgrim Psychiatric Center was an "answer," a transcending discovery piece — a photocopy of Browning's death certificate! Standing there alone in my living room, that sheet of history in hand, a 1925 original of his book on the table, his photographic glass negatives honoring the hallway closet, in a privileged, sublime moment, an ethereal covenant with Ard himself, rejoicing to welcome our Tut back to the world of those whose lives had at least, at last, provided a background, an authoritative basis of vital statistics upon which to build! The 1920 census sheet and card, together that single "bone," that entranceway to his life, now had a companion piece, a further source of continuity — the formerly transparent Ard W. Browning could doff his proverbial cap and take another bow in spirit, for while conspicuously silent in life, even maddeningly so, he had spoken in death for the second time. True to her exhaustive though anything but futile search, the inadvertently "Givan" clue was a bolt from the blue!

The resulting death certificate

⁵Letter from Nancy Givan to author dated October 24, 1995.

naturally represents "a new country heard from," an endowment of simple names and numbers, data begetting more data, summoning forth the man who was Browning. Diagnosed on May 20, 1933 by Dr. Ferdinand Pitrelli, the direct cause of death was lobar pneumonia, with chronic myocarditis as a contributory cause. The document updates and clarifies pertinent information, and serves to correct a key item of misinformation entered into the census sheet and card. According to the pedestrian, matter-of-fact death certificate, Ard W. Browning was born on January 12, 1869. The discrepancy between that accurate and precise date and the "1871 or 1872" calculations in the 1997 "Asylum" text is due to a lone bit of misinformation in the census sheet and card. Browning was a day short of 51 on January 11, 1920 rather than 48 as reported in the census. Whether an intentional "youth movement" or an innocent, momentary lapse, 48 had understandably appeared certain at the time. To err is human, and the "Looking Glass" text, while in a flight of fancy, also analogized the mysterious disappearance of Judge (Joseph Force) Crater as another 1925 original, when actually he disappeared on August 6, 1930 — perhaps he was hard-pressed to do anything right!

The death certificate states Ard's birthplace as Chicago, Illinois, the whereabouts of Mrs.

O'Leary's cow. Recent inquiry in order to bring to light a copy of his birth certificate proved fruitless, as, unfortunately, none was to be had. Thusly the Illinois Secretary of State Office official reply

In response to your inquiry, we searched the Cook County birth index (1871-1916), and were unable to locate a record of the birth of Ard W. Browning. Like most county level records for Cook County, birth records prior to October, 1871 were destroyed by the Great Fire of Chicago. Therefore, if Ard W. Browning was born before October, 1871 in Cook County, any record of his birth would have been destroyed by the fire.⁶

With no application ever made by Ard's parents for a replacement birth certificate, so then what else is new in the elusive life of this highly admired slippery eel, this Cool Hand Luke of circumstantial anonymity! Could he just possibly have ridden with Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid in the 1890s?

Browning again is seen to have been single rather than married. The death certificate expressly states that he worked "in hospital," and also records him to have resided in Central Islip, "... city or town where death occurred," for "14 years, 5 months, 18 days." This is the duration of his employment at the hospital, answering now the 1997 "Looking Glass" call for 2002 census information to determine if he had remained at

⁶Barbara Heflin, Office of the Secretary of State of Illinois; letter to author dated August 16, 1999.

his hospital station into the 1930s. Yes, he had, right up to May 20, 1933, and, then lingering for four days, there he died. Curiously, he is listed to have spent exactly 15 years as a hospital stenographer, indicating that he had earlier worked for about six and a half months at a different hospital. What else had he done throughout his first 49 years, up until the late Spring of 1918 when he entered this known avocation?

There were three people who could have filled in many details, if only such convenience and timing had been in Ard's stars. His father was William H. Browning, of Dayton, Ohio, thereby identifying with great near-positive certainty the name behind that part-and-parcel middle initial "W." — Ard William Browning. Expounding further, in a more contemplative sense, rather than naming Ard this extremely rare appellation perhaps after a grandfather (his name is even rarer than the book, being near the uniqueness of the glass negatives!), he could still possibly have received his full name from his father. Hypothetically, if his father's middle initial "H" happened to stand for Howard, then 131 years ago our Ard may have been named "Howard," and the regional derivative, the 19th century dialect, had in turn shortened the pronunciation to "Ard"!⁵ Howard William

Browning, a proper reversal of his father's name. Over time he could have come to recognize himself as "Ard," or simply preferred the more familiar abbreviation over the given name "Howard." At some point, he may have changed "Howard" to "Ard."

Another possibility is that Ard may have a Biblical origin. Two Ards are recorded in the Bible.⁷ In view of the tendency in 19th century America to use biblical names, even very obscure ones, this possibility cannot be discounted.

Regrettably, due to the fire, hopeful inquiry cannot be made on the possible January 12, 1869 Chicago birth of a Howard William Browning. No application was ever made for a replacement birth certificate in that name, and, considering all chances, "howevard" remote, no such person was born in Chicago during post-October, 1871 or in 1872. Finally, intriguingly, the 1917 *New York Numismatic Club Year Book* membership list, in compounding, further confounding the riddle—while adhering to a style that lists others as "Dr. Geo. P. French," "Ed. T. Newell" and "Wm. Hesslein" has Browning interestingly listed as "Ard. W. Browning" If "Ard" were short for "Howard" based upon the style of this list, Browning should have appeared as "Hwd. W. Browning." Instead, the

⁷*Genesis* 46:21 records an Ard son of Benjamin while *Numbers* 26:40. notes an Ard son of Bela who is recorded to be the ancestor of the Ardites, an clan whose history is otherwise unrecorded. The name means in Hebrew "I shall subdue."

abbreviation used is "Ard." This suggests that "Ard" was short for a name beginning with the letter "A" such as Arden.

It may be that the compiler(s) of this list thought that "Ard" was short for something but did not know what it was. Equally, it could simply be an error on the part of the compiler or the printer.

William's wife and Ard's mother was the former Mary Virgil, of Montrose, Pennsylvania. Charles V. Browning, residing in Hereford, Pennsylvania at the time of Ard's passing, was Ard's younger brother by two years, living from 1871-1957 (he must have also been born in Chicago, as clearly evidenced by Hereford, preceded by Mrs. O'Leary's cow!). What an ideal subject for an interview he would have been! Did Charles know of his brother's stroll hand-in-hand with the Queen of Coins, the goddess Numisma, or was he just somewhat aware that Ard had written a "coin book"? Coinversely, did Charles receive an inscribed deluxe interleaved copy, and furthermore, was an aged William or Mary the proud recipient of a book? Considering that a few of the deluxe issue have perennially gone unaccounted for, this scenario, while speculative of course, is a plausible worthy contender as an answer to this ongoing conundrum. Furthermore, the 1925 edition itself, standard and deluxe (priced at six dollars and fifteen dollars) were both available for a long while after publication, as copies of each were

still being offered by Wayte Raymond in the April, 1929 issue of *The Numismatist*.

Their "on-time" availability and distribution is well-attested to by the renowned September 18, 1926 inscribed standard copy from Browning to B. Max Mehl. Therefore, Ard had a "relatively" long span of time to have possibly sent out "complimentaries."

In a bit of happenstance and *Early Quarter Dollars* "Whimsy," Browning's death certificate lists his undertaker as one Elizabeth E. McBreen, capriciously played out here as the original "Browning/Breen" (Ard would surely have appreciated a legitimate touch of levity later drawn from research!). One last far-reaching entry, a generative hive of compelling leads in the Central Islip death certificate, hastening another immediate breakthrough on the history of our friend/mystery man, our wanderer — "place of burial, cremation, or removal" was written in as "Palm Cemetery, Palm, Pa."

The village of Palm, in Southeastern Pennsylvania, 67 years and one lucky telephone call away! Upon phoning the aptly-termed information operator for Palm, and requesting the number of the library or any local church, the number given was an inspired connection to a part-time church secretary and full-time Guardian Angel, the resident answer to this petitioner's prayer! Enter Nadine Morris, resourceful and a willing hand, upholding an inherent sense of

good fellowship and posterity, the now former Secretary of the Palm Schwenkfelder Church, recently having taken a full-time secular position. As she kindly related, the Schwenkfelder Church was founded by Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig of Silesia, a contemporary of Martin Luther. The members traditionally refer to themselves as "Schwenkfelders." An Associate Member of the United Church of Christ, the Church is composed of approximately 3,000 members in five congregations located in southeastern Pennsylvania: Palm, Norristown, Lansdale, Worcester (Central), and Philadelphia; and each church has a churchyard and cemetery.

Could that hope-against-hope indiscriminate morning call to Palm, "on the first try," haphazardly requesting a connection to "the library or any church, please," actually culminate in the off-chance discovery of Browning's final resting place? Did the Schwenkfelders and their Church Secretary really hold the key to our long-lost author? Personal familiarity suggested a more metropolitan notion, such as a Methodist church, a Baptist church, perhaps a Catholic, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or Lutheran church.

This kind of "Schwenkfelder" thing usually just doesn't happen, doesn't pan out, and, anyhow, what of the public, non-denominational "Palm Cemetery" inscribed on the death certificate? But, no, the

Secretary patiently made clear that no specific Palm Cemetery as written existed, that in fact, early on, the Schwenkfelder Church cemetery was effectively the Palm cemetery, and, meanwhile, writing down this seeker's phone number and address, stating that she would happily be of assistance if possible. "Thank you for your help and your offer of further assistance, and please call if anything or anyone shows up. Good-bye."

Off to the bathroom to shave, and five minutes into shaving the telephone rings and rings again — it just could not be, not something this perfect, but, Ard's stars, it was! The caller, Nadine Morris, 20 minutes earlier a stranger, and now an associate! Noting June 25, 1999 ... after immediately consulting the cemetery plot chart, she went into the churchyard — and there, awaiting, right outside the church, just like that, was the grave and marble memorial stone bearing the telltale dates "1869-1933," and the "impossible" name, a seemingly impossible dream, "Ard W. Browning"!

Unexpectedly, alongside of Ard were the graves and memorial stones of brother Charles V. Browning and his wife Annie L. Browning (1875-1943) — the entire generation of the family! Helen, the daughter of Charles and Annie (and the niece of Uncle Ard) is also at rest there along with her husband Lloyd Kratz. She was born on February 12, 1905, and died on September 23, 1977. Helen and Lloyd had no children, leaving us sans any

possible family reminiscences of Ard. In 66 years, the fates had apparently declined to direct even one student of numismatics or knowledgeable buff through that relatively small churchyard!

Figuratively, the tomb seals were broken at last, and now the corroborative death certificate, along with the initial census sheet and card, that single "bone," were joined by the very bones of our noble and his family ... Ard was back home. Church Secretary/paleontologist Nadine Morris was forevermore the Mary Leakey of Palm! Her careful review of Schwenkfelder Church records then verified that neither Ard, Charles, Annie, Helen or Lloyd had ever been Church members — the Schwenkfelders, named after one who had fled from religious persecution in Europe, had a quiet place for the Brownings, their neighbors.

The following week, upon request, color photographs of the gravesites were graciously sent, accompanied by a descriptive letter and a postcard size photograph of the church. Then one final inquiry, and, with the kind assistance of a 90-something former Editor, Nadine uncovered yet another document, another "bone," a photocopied page from the Friday, June 2, 1933 issue of the greater area *Town And Country* newspaper, with an obituary:

Ard Browning, formerly of East Greenville, died in Long Island Hospital (sic, sick), New York.

Funeral services were held Saturday afternoon at the Dimmig Funeral (sic) Home, East Greenville. Interment took place in the Palm Schwenkfelder cemetery. Rev. Lester K. Kriebel officiated. Funeral Director William H. Dimmig, of East Greenville, had charge. One brother, Charles Browning, of Hereford, survives.

Thusly, Ard was laid to rest. *Early Quarter Dollars* was conspicuously absent from mention in his hometown obituary.

"Formerly of East Greenville" ... once upon a time his hometown, laughing with the friendly faces of fellow townsmen — Ard W. Browning was seemingly active and well-regarded, hardly anonymous, when residing there, prior to his later life, his tenure, his secret, as an employee/resident at Central Islip. What line of work, other than stenography, might he have followed in East Greenville? Where else might he have lived, if anywhere else, in his younger days, before New York City and various addresses there, with his membership in the New York Numismatic Club, beginning in 1914, and, eventually, on to his hospital avocation, then 1925, and *The Early Quarter Dollars Of The United States*?

Charles had been a loving brother, evidently keeping contact, then tending after Ard, arranging for his body to be brought back home for burial in a special place, a serene spot, also chosen, in turn, for himself and Annie.

Reflectively, the aforementioned prospect of that

inscribed, deluxe interleaved copy is indeed quite possible, in fact probable. And just perhaps, might the East Greenville library or an institution nearby, hold a hometown treasure once sent from P.O. Box 539?

Parents William and Mary would have been proud of both their sons, and being from Montrose, Mary most likely influenced and effected their residency in Pennsylvania. The year 1933 is rapidly becoming more and more distant now in the year 2000 ... fifty miles and yet a world away from both Philadelphia and 1933, nary a Browning is living today in East Greenville, Hereford or Palm.

"The passing along of his genes"⁸ — it has been mused that, true, all life is generated by that primal impulse, for offspring, and, that among us mortals, this end might be accomplished either by having children or by publishing a work everlasting. Ard W. Browning, a man formerly unknown to that furthest extent that his very existence was debatable, amid whispers that the name itself may have been a nom de plume, an imaginative creation, and "leaving no trace of the history of the work,"⁹ with each new scrap of possible evidence

weighed — that real Ard W. Browning, that giant, arose to contribute "the most perfect numismatic book written on the first try."¹⁰ The *Early Quarter Dollars Of The United States* has spoken volumes for the otherwise silent Ard, "enlivening a 'feel' and a sense of uniformity for scholars and collectors, creating access to the particulars of Bust Quarters."¹¹

Those very rare 1925 originals of the book and the unique photographic glass negatives of the plates, Browning's own direct link to himself, have taken on a mystique, a life, parallel to the enshrouded author. The words landmark, celebrated, vibrant and wellspring all reach their full impact, readily coming to mind, while simply holding a copy in hand, and he appears to be "happening" within the pages! "The Word" in its field, an original Browning exceeds in sheer wonder even its own groundbreaking and definitive content ...

And so, in the twilight of his journey, while following an avocation and a "star," Central Islip State Hospital was a destination ... and the enlightener Ard W. Browning, the "Edison" of *Early Quarter Dollars*, is among his fellows, home with us today.¹²

⁸ Herkowitz (1997), p.11.

⁹ Davis (1992), p.28.

¹⁰ Davis (1995), p.51, lot. 1102, quoting Walter Breen.

¹¹ C.R. Herkowitz, "Another Browning, another poetry ... in celebration of a book," *The Numismatist* 105 (1992), p.386.

¹² Special thanks to my good friend George F. Kolbe for his most valued assistance in helping to put together this work.

The Printer's Devil: William Gowans and the First U.S. Auctions of Numismatic Literature

By Joel J. Orosz

Numismatic discoveries, at least in the bibliomania line, often seem to be made more by serendipity than by strategy. A case in point is the discovery of not one, but three public auctions of numismatic literature that push back, by nine years, the date of the earliest known sales in the United States in which numismatic literature played a major rôle. The discovery of these auctions came about not because of brilliant detective work, but rather due to a chance encounter and a little luck. In any case, this find proves (at least for now) that the honor of conducting the first such public sale belongs not to any coin dealer, nor even to a noted auction house, but rather to William Gowans, one of the great antiquarian booksellers of nineteenth century America.

Numismatists of the late twentieth century remember Gowans dimly, if at all, for his involvement in the sale of the great antiquarian aggregation of John Allan (1777-1863), an omnivorous collector of many things, including coins. After Allan passed away, his multifaceted collection of books, coins, guns, watches, and many other items was catalogued by Joseph Sabin (one of Gowans' main competitors in the book selling line),

and sold by Bangs, Merwin & Company on May 2, 1864. After the sale, Gowans compiled the prices realized and the buyers' names for all 5,278 lots, and in 1865, Joel Munsell (one of America's premier publishers) printed 400 copies of this list, intended to be bound with the Sabin catalogue of the Allan collection. Gowans made sure buyers got their money's worth by prefacing this publication with both an "Introduction" and an "Appendix" covering between them ten and one half pages of small type. The catalogue of the Allan collection, and Gowans' prices and names compilation, are both obscure bits of numismatic Americana; rare indeed is the numismatic bibliophile today who would recognize the name of William Gowans.

In Gowans' own lifetime, however, it was a different story. Benson J. Lossing, the historian who became the first honorary member of the American Numismatic Society, was a steady customer. Dr. William C. Prime, the numismatist who wrote the book *Coins, Medals and Seals, Ancient and Modern* in 1861, was also a ready buyer, and he remembered Gowans' shop in an article titled "Old Books in New York" published in *Harper's New Monthly*

Magazine for February of 1872.

The stock was probably the largest of the kind in the world. We do not know of any such accumulation elsewhere, although we have examined many of the great collections in the hands of booksellers. There were many more valuable collections, but none so large, and probably none so wholly without arrangement. The stock was contained in a Nassau Street building, on the first floor, the basement, and a sub-cellar. The floors were nearly two hundred feet in depth from front to rear. Originally the sides were shelved to the ceiling, and two rows of tables ran down the length of the first floor. But as the stock increased it was piled, first on tables, then on the floors, until the mass of books was everywhere impenetrable, except by narrow alleys running here and there, and at length the piles began to topple over and fall into the alleys, so that the careless investigator was likely to tread on books at every step. The basement was a wonder. There was no gas, and the trusted customer who was permitted to search in its gloomy recesses was furnished with a kerosene lamp having no chimney, and casting a dim, flaring light on vast piles lying in confusion everywhere, and which, in several parts of the long room, were not less than ten or fifteen feet in thickness. Of course thousands of books were buried out of sight in these masses, and the owner himself knew little of what he possessed in his great catacombs

... but, for all that, there were treasures in that Nassau Street cellar which were worth hunting after, though it was work to hunt for them. It was like excavating an old ruins. One could never tell what would turn up, and now and then it was startling to see the jewels that came out of the heap (page 386).

Indeed, Gowans was both a fire hazard and a bookseller of mammoth proportions. For many years he occupied a shop at 178 Fulton Street, just across Broadway and one block south of P.T. Barnum's great American Museum. The crowds which thronged the famous showman's exhibits could, and did, find their way into Gowans' shop. Enough did so that, after his death, he was deemed important enough to be included in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

As it turns out, Gowans was known by another notable numismatist of the era, Charles Ira Bushnell. This fact is established by the appearance of a copy of Bushnell's *An Historical Account of the First Three Business Tokens Issued in the City of New York* (1859), inscribed to Gowans by the author. This association piece appeared as Lot 55 of The Money Tree's auction on November 27, 1999. The inscription, which appears on the cover, reads, "William Gowans Esq. with the Compliments of the Author." This information suggests that Bushnell was probably a customer of Gowans, and possibly a friend as well. All inscriptions of this sort, however, leave bibliophiles unsure

whether the author wrote the words, or whether the recipient wrote them as a sort of record of the gift. In this case, we can eliminate the author; Bushnell's known authentic signature was distinctively tall and florid, while the handwriting on the cover is conventionally sized and rounded. Clearly then, Bushnell made a gift of the book, but did not personally inscribe it.

Still, the Bushnell connection, coupled with the prime description and the Allan price list, suggested that Gowans may have played a rôle of numismatic significance during his lifetime.

Further investigation turned up a copy of the fourth annual Sol M. Malkin lecture, delivered by Roger E. Stoddard, the curator of rare books at the Harvard University library. The title was, *Put a Resolute Hart to a Steep Hill: William Gowans, Antiquary and Bookseller*. Veteran bibliophiles will remember Mr. Malkin (1910-1986) as the founder and long-time editor of *A.B. Bookman's Weekly*. In Stoddard's capable hands, the Malkin lecture becomes an interesting story of Gowans' rise from impoverished immigrant to bookselling bashaw.

Gowans had colorful associations (including a stint of eight months as a fellow-boarder with Edgar Allen Poe), and a relentless will to succeed. On March 29, 1828, he opened a street vendor's bookstall in New York City, and built it into the mammoth omnium gatherum of books described by Dr. Prime.

He died the death of a true bibliopole, on November 23, 1870, after a full day of cataloging new acquisitions at his store. Every bookseller in New York City closed his shop for Gowans' funeral as a mark of respect. The dispersal of the gargantuan Gowans stock at public auction required 16 sales spanning more than a year, consisting of 60,520 lots (many of which contained multiple books) on 2,476 pages, and these 16 auctions occurred after his executors sold eight tons of his stock for waste paper at four and one quarter cents per pound. Joseph Sabin, his chief competitor, was utterly dismissive in his assessment of this minor mountain of literature: "The immense stock of the late Mr. William Gowans did not include any book of special value."

Roger Stoddard's research, however, gives the lie to that assessment, at least insofar as numismatic bibliophiles are concerned. In his listing of public auction sales conducted by Gowans, Stoddard includes no fewer than three in which numismatic literature played a prominent (indeed marquee) rôle, and all were dated prior to 1844. It should be mentioned, before going any further, that books about coins have been sold at public auctions in the United States since at least the Pierre Eugène DuSimitiere sale in 1785. These sales, however, consisted of a handful of numismatic titles in a much larger auction of other items. It has been widely assumed that the first public

sale to contain a significant number of books about coins (16 to be exact), was the auction of the estate of Dr. Lewis Roper, held in Philadelphia on February 20-21, 1851. Stoddard's research dethrones the Roper sale, for he demonstrated that Gowans held no fewer than three auctions in 1842 and 1843 that actually included numismatic literature in the title of the catalogue.

The three are as follows: (1) Gowans Catalogue No. 4: *A Catalogue of an Uncommon Collection of Very Curious & Unique Old English and Foreign Books, of Emblems, Coins, Medals, Heraldry, Illustrated Books of Travel & Antiquities, Treatises on the Fine Arts, Scottish Poetry, History, & Antiquities, Standard Old English Dramatic Works, Many of the Classics, Both in Original & Translated ... All of Which Will Be Sold by Auction by Royal Gurley at the New York Long Room, No. 169 Broadway, on ... February 17 & 18, 1842 ... New-York: C. Vinten Catalogue Printer, 63 Vesey Street near Greenwich. According to Stoddard, the catalogue has 32 pages and 710 lots, and is McKay 327.*

(2) Gowans' Catalogue No. 6: *Catalogue of an Uncommon Collection of Very Curious and Unique Old English and Foreign Books of Emblems, Coins, Medals, Heraldry, Illustrated Books of Travels and Antiquities, Treatises on the Fine Arts, & c. Also, About fifty Volumes of Standard Law Books, Recent Editions ... All of Which Will be Sold by Auction, by William Gowans, at the Waverley*

Sales Room, 204 Broadway, (upstairs,) ... Jan'y 10th and 11th, 1842 [hand-corrected to 1843] ... New-York: Vinten Catalogue Printer, 63 Vesey Street. Near Greenwich. According to Stoddard, this catalogue of 26 pages contains 602 lots and is McKay 344.

(3) Gowans' Catalogue No. 7: *A Catalogue of Curious and Unique Black Letter Books, Published Between 1477 & 1505, Many of Them Rubricated, Presenting Beautiful Specimens of Early Typography, also Books on Coins and Emblems, to be Sold at Auction, by William Gowans, at the Waverley Sales Room, 204 Broadway, Upstairs ... May 22, 1834 [i.e., 1843] Stoddard says that this is an eight-page catalogue containing more than 190 unpriced items, McKay 340.*

So February 17-18, 1842 is now the earliest known date of sale in the United States for a significant collection of numismatic literature. Just whose library (or libraries) these sales represented, however, is not known. The obvious suspects — Robert Gilmore, Jr., Philip Hone, Joseph J. Mickley, and Matthew Stickney — all lived past the 1842-1843 timeframe of these three sales. The wide-ranging subject matter, with some concentration on Scotland, suggests that John Allan may have been the source, but he too lived on long after 1842-43. Perhaps a more important question is, "Who bought the books thus offered?" Again, the answer is not known, although Charles Ira Bushnell is certainly one sus-

pect. In any case, to William Gowans clearly belongs the honor, at least for the present, of being the first in the field of selling numismatic literature in the United States.

Stoddard's work also pinpoints the identify of the person who signed the copy of Bushnell's *An Historical Account of the First Three Business Tokens Issued in the City of New York*. Stoddard relates that Gowans never learned to spell properly, and employed his general amanuensis, Edward W. Nash, to inscribe his correspondence and write out his bibliographical notes. From a sample of Nash's handwriting reproduced on page 50 of Stoddard's "Put a Resolute Hart to a Steep Hill," it appears clear that it was Nash, not Gowans, who inscribed Gowans' copy of Bushnell's *An Historical Account*.

If Gowans did not leave his mark on that booklet, however, he did leave a mark on American numismatics. True, that mark

has been largely invisible up until now, but it was there nonetheless. What that Scottish immigrant bibliophilic pack-rat did was to hold the first three public auctions in the United States in which numismatic literature was a headline item. Literally hundreds of such sales have followed since, but it was Gowans who got the ball rolling, and he deserves to be remembered for it.

One horrifying thought remains, however, to be considered. Of that eight tons of Gowans' stock sold for wastepaper by his executors, just how many titles might have gone to the pulping mill which today's numismatic bibliophile would lust to own? No list was kept, so we will never know. Perhaps it is better simply to concentrate on the many good things that Gowans left behind, especially those groundbreaking numismatic literature sales held during the administration of John Tyler.

Erratum:

Due to an error in the editing/production process, the last line in the final paragraph of John and Nancy Wilson's "Over Printed Coin Show Red Books and Mr. Yeo," in the Summer 2000 issue (pp.89-90), was omitted. The full paragraph should read:

Yeoman served on the ANA board of governors from 1946 to 1951 and was a very positive force in the hobby. He received a number of national awards for his outstanding contributions to numismatics. In 1952 he received the ANA Medal of Merit and in 1957 was awarded the ANA's highest award -- the Ferran Zerbe. In 1964 he was appointed to the U.S. Assay Commission by President Lyndon Johnson.

The editor regrets any confusion this may have caused the readers.

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